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Chairman: Mr. Al-Hinai ..... (Oman)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 117: Elimination of racism and racial discrimination (*continued*) (A/56/3, A/56/18 and Corr.1, A/56/48, A/56/71-E/2001/65, A/56/79, A/56/94, A/56/228, A/56/364, A/56/481, A/56/647, A/56/649, A/56/673; A/CONF.189/12)

1. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to resume its consideration of agenda item 117.

2. **Mr. Jokonya** (Zimbabwe) associated his delegation with the statement made by the representative of Malawi on behalf of the member States of the Southern African Development Community and welcomed the report of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban (South Africa). The attempts by some participants in the Conference to negate the struggle against racism or deny its legitimacy had been an attack on human dignity. He sincerely hoped that a follow-up mechanism to the Conference would be established not only to right the wrongs of the past but also to create a world free of racism and related intolerance.

3. Colonialism and apartheid had been essential components of the dialectic between moral compulsion and material interests and it would require much courage, leadership and political will for the international community to correct policies and practices based on racial bias. It was important that the World Conference had condemned the slave trade and slavery and recognized the need to compensate the victims of that inhuman practice.

4. Although the international community had redoubled its efforts to combat the evils of racism and its manifestations, discordant voices continued to vehemently defend the vestiges of colonialism and racial privilege and vilify those who attempted to place moral compulsion above material interests by re-ordering Zimbabwe's economy for the benefit of all. Western support for a racial minority cruelly hurt the indigenous people of Zimbabwe and made a mockery of the values and ethics of human rights. The support received by 4,500 white settlers in the name of preservation of stolen property at the expense of 13 million people diminished any commitment to human rights, justice and indeed the rule of law. Above all, it was a recipe for conflict and a threat to national stability.

5. The defenders of racial privilege had condemned the Government of Zimbabwe for instituting a land reform programme which was a prerequisite for redressing historical injustice in the distribution of land. Those who defended the rights of the minority believed that any attempt by his Government to correct that injustice constituted a violation of the rule of law. In the case of Zimbabwe, democracy, good governance and the rule of law had been redefined to mean protection of white privilege. His Government hoped that the world movement against racism would reject that clearly unacceptable message. Fortunately, the countries of the Southern African Development Community subregion, which had fought together for sovereignty and against colonialism and apartheid, refused to be used to isolate Zimbabwe or support the antagonistic reality capitalism.

6. The purpose of Zimbabwe's land reform programme was equitable distribution of national resources to ensure that all Zimbabweans able and willing to till the land would have an opportunity to do so regardless of their colour or any other differences. That process was inevitable in the entire southern African region in spite of the reactionary instincts of the defenders of the fascism of an earlier era.

7. **Mr. Osmane** (Algeria) said that the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance had provided an opportunity to review the progress made in the struggle against racism and to study measures to best ensure respect for existing standards. For the first time in history the injustices of slavery and colonialism had been addressed. In addition, the World Conference had constituted an important step in efforts for reconciliation. At the Conference, his delegation had advocated the establishment of a new humanism, based on generosity, solidarity, equality and justice, free of prejudice and reactionary viewpoints, which would make it possible to overcome narrow self-interest and make the interdependence, indivisibility and integrity of all human rights a concrete reality. Although racism in its traditional form had receded with the end of apartheid, there were currently equally serious forms of racism based on nationality, culture, religion and level of development, which represented a great challenge for the United Nations and all humanity in the third millennium.

8. **Archbishop Martino** (Permanent Observer of the Holy See) said that no one could deny that the family

of nations needed a concerted programme of action to address racism. New ways to foster the harmonious coexistence and interaction of individuals and peoples must be explored in order to create a culture in which, as Pope John Paul II had said on 26 August 2001, it was possible to recognize in every man and woman a brother and a sister with whom to walk the path of solidarity and peace.

9. The Holy See had worked with the delegations of many countries at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and was particularly grateful to the Government of South Africa for its work as host of the Conference. During the Conference it had become apparent that it was very difficult to deal with a problem which constituted an offence against the fundamental dignity of persons. It was therefore extremely important, as a matter of urgency, to establish a programme of action to address the question of racism. The Holy See urged all nations without delay, individually and in collaboration with other States and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to establish a clear programme to fight racism, using the many positive elements of the outcome documents of the World Conference. Such a programme must begin at the level of national legislation and practice and should address in particular the situation of refugees, migrants, indigenous peoples and minority groups. Moreover, legislation must be accompanied by education. Education on racial tolerance must be a normal component of educational programmes at all levels. Acceptance of others must be taught first and foremost in the family, government agencies must never justify racial profiling and the mass media must avoid such practices. The Holy See was deeply concerned about the issue of racism and religious intolerance, which was referred to in the World Conference documents. Members of religious, linguistic or ethnic minorities must be guaranteed the right to practice their religion.

10. In a world in which religion was often exploited as a means to deepen existing political, social or economic divisions, it was encouraging to note the growing number of initiatives, at both the local and international levels, to promote dialogue among religions; such dialogue could make a strong contribution to the fight against racism. The Durban Declaration was important because by stressing promotion of human dignity it recognized the central role played by religion in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

11. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) welcomed the presence at the meeting of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and said that the High Commissioner's work was more important than ever given the need to ensure follow-up to the World Conference. The High Commissioner therefore deserved all necessary support and resources. At the World Conference it had become clear that racism, discrimination and intolerance were problems which continued to affect all countries, despite the progress made in the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The painful Durban process had resulted in a Programme of Action which had received the support of the majority of the Member States although regrettably the issuance of the Conference's outcome document had been delayed. Differences of opinion must be overcome in order to move ahead; much work remained to be done in order to meet the commitment to combat racism made at the World Conference.

12. Efforts in that regard must focus on: peace and human rights education; the adoption of effective national measures against hatred, intolerance and discrimination such as institution-building, promulgation of effective laws and promotion of a culture of anti-discrimination; prevention of impunity for perpetrators of hate crimes, including monitoring and training of officials responsible for the administration of justice; and finally, effective and wide-ranging international cooperation to build an international order based on inclusion, justice, equality and equity, human dignity, mutual understanding and promotion of and respect for cultural diversity and universal human rights.

13. In Bangladesh, the Constitution expressly forbade discrimination on grounds of race, religion, caste, sex or birthplace, guaranteed equality before the law for all citizens and provided for affirmative action for disadvantaged social groups. Internationally, Bangladesh had supported the struggle against racism and intolerance and was a party to all the major human rights conventions, which it was endeavouring to implement despite all its limitations. In accordance with its principled position, it unequivocally rejected the policies and practices of the occupying Power in the Middle East, which were clear violations of international law and universally recognized human

rights. Bangladesh had always stood by the victims of racism and was committed to adopting measures at the national and international levels to combat racism and other such abhorrent practices. It urged all countries to remain steadfast in the global efforts to uproot the scourge of racism so that it would finally be possible to live in a truly civilized world.

14. **Mr. Ahmed** (Iraq) said that the struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance was one of the main objectives of the United Nations as well as of international humanitarian law. The issue had greatly occupied the international community and, although numerous instruments and agreements had been formulated and various international declarations had been proclaimed in that regard, many problems remained unresolved and must be seriously addressed.

15. No one could deny that racist practices and acts of all kinds had grown in number during the previous decade, especially acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing, military actions and discrimination against refugees, migrant workers and indigenous populations, and that new forms of control and economic exploitation of the resources of peoples had appeared, including the imposition of globalization and the widespread use of economic sanctions. Furthermore, notions of ethnic, cultural or religious superiority had become more common, which presented the world with great challenges, as was clearly demonstrated by the aggravation of economic, social and cultural problems and the humanitarian tragedies which afflicted many parts of the world. The international community must work diligently to put an end to racist phenomena and practices and establish peace, security, respect and tolerance thereby eradicating poverty and degradation and making progress and development for all a reality, through the establishment of a just and equitable international order. The lessons of the past must be learned and measures must be taken to deal with the tragedies currently faced by some peoples.

16. Iraq had suffered from many forms of discrimination linked to phenomena such as injustice and deprivation; the tragic situation which the Iraqi people were experiencing as a result of the total economic embargo imposed for more than 11 years and persistent military aggression, was just one clear example of the racist attitude which gave rise to the animosity against them and had led to a genocide in which more than a million Iraqis had died. In occupied Palestine, the Israeli occupation forces had been committing crimes against humanity since 1948 for all the world to see and were responsible for the most odious forms of aggression and racist discrimination against the defenceless Palestinian people, in the form of killing of civilians, especially children, isolation of towns and cities, imposition of economic blockades, destruction of homes and crops and other inhuman practices which must be condemned, as the international community had done at the World Conference. There was no doubt that the African continent was the greatest victim of racism, racial discrimination, deportation and slavery. The peoples of Africa had suffered greatly during the colonial period and under foreign occupation, with all the looting of resources which had taken place during that time. The colonial Powers must admit their responsibility and offer compensation and apologies; they must also condemn the horrific crimes and injustices committed against the indigenous peoples, who had been enslaved and subjected to other forms of servitude because of their African origin.

17. His delegation eagerly looked forward to the coming of a new era in which justice would prevail, equality, stability and peace would be achieved for all and all forms of racism, racial discrimination and injustice would be eliminated. It was time to assume moral and human responsibilities and condemn racist practices which could only lead to genocide and humanitarian tragedies, including the imposition of economic embargoes and military action; his delegation called for an end to such practices.

18. **Mr. Siv** (United States of America) said that for his country, the work to eliminate racism, both at home and abroad, was not only a duty but also a historic commitment rooted deep in its national experience. Throughout most of history, conflict and conquest, sometimes along racial lines, had been taken for granted. The United States, although founded on the principles of liberty and equality, had not been exempt from its historical context, which had been detrimental in particular to its indigenous inhabitants and to the Africans brought to the country as slaves. As a result of the civil war, slavery, that most horrendous manifestation of racism, had been abolished, but racism itself had not been eliminated. Subsequently, the United States had been engaged in a continuous struggle to protect basic human rights and fundamental freedoms for all its citizens, regardless of their race,

ethnicity or religious belief. To do so it had used an approach comprising democracy, education and the rule of law, which it would recommend to other countries, and had undertaken an ongoing process of legislative reform which had included various amendments to its Constitution and the adoption of a regulatory framework.

19. The United States had succeeded in creating a richly diverse society which offered unlimited opportunities to people of all races, ethnicities and religious beliefs. Nevertheless, much more needed to be done. Many communities remained divided by ignorance and fear, as a result of the legacy of racial segregation. There continued to be disparities in education and income between various population groups. It was important to note that the United States' determination to overcome the divisions and disparities with a view to achieving a more perfect union would not diminish because of the war against terrorism. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 11 September, Americans of all races, ethnicities and creeds had come together to protect their human rights, fundamental freedoms and basic values. The federal government, along with the state governments and civil society, were working to ensure that no person was targeted or persecuted because of his or her race, creed or national origin. The President had underscored that commitment by visiting a mosque and by celebrating Ramadan at the White House, in the company of a large group of Muslim clergy. Those who wanted to threaten the magnificent diversity of American society would only succeed in strengthening its sense of unity.

20. The commitment of the United States to combating racial and ethnic strife had also been evident abroad. In the Balkans, the United States was promoting a television series which taught tolerance and non-violent conflict resolution to children; in Cuba the National Endowment for Democracy was helping black Cubans to achieve a peaceful transition to democracy; elsewhere in Latin America, the United States Agency for International Development was providing almost a million dollars to the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights to implement programmes that enhanced racial and ethnic harmony; in Africa, the Great Lakes Reconciliation Project in Justice and Journalism made use of the media and the judicial process to promote understanding, the rule of law and respect for human rights. As a signatory to the Paris Accords, the United States was investing $25 million in the development of strong democratic institutions in Cambodia. In Afghanistan, where the exclusion of important segments of the population had led to the deadly combination of radical extremism and terrorism which the country was currently experiencing, it was necessary to put an end to oppression and establish a broadly-based government, representative of the various peoples of the country and respectful of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all.

21. The strategies employed for combating racism, while powerful, could not be left untended. Democracy and the rule of law were not automatic, sure-fire remedies against racial conflict and disunity, but were dynamic and complex instruments which must be continuously appraised and monitored. The elimination of racism throughout the world would only be possible through a free and open debate. At the same time it must be recognized that history was immutable. Although the United States had not wished to lend its fullest support to the World Conference and would not endorse its outcome document, its commitment to the goals of the Conference was unequivocal and should not be doubted. Each country must confront its own past in order to learn from it and devise effective national remedies. The United States would therefore continue to use the best tools at its disposal — democracy, education and the rule of law — to ensure that justice prevailed over racism in all its manifestations and wherever it appeared.

22. **Mr. Amorós Núñez** (Cuba), speaking in exercise of the right of reply and referring to the comment made by the representative of the United States of America concerning cooperation on the part of a federal agency with certain sectors of the Cuban population, said that his delegation did not believe that that cooperation constituted a contribution to the fight against racism given that, as had been shown by history, there was no institutionalized racism in Cuba. Those countries which actually suffered from grave domestic problems of that type should make every effort to eliminate them. Furthermore, as had been demonstrated at the World Conference, international forums existed for debate on that issue, and all countries, in particular the United States of America, should increase their participation in and collaboration with such forums with a view to strengthening international cooperation in that regard.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.